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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHY, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

BY ancient amateur photography we mean the practice of the art say fifteen or twenty years ago, with the wet collodion process, and prior to the present general use of dry plates.

Modern amateur photography is a very different thing. It consists, substantially, in pointing a camera and touching a spring. It requires no study, no genius, no skill. Even children are now photographers, and the camera is coming to be a toy. How different were the duties of the ancient amateur photographer was ably described by Henry J. Newton in a recent address read before the New York Society of Amateur Photographers. He said:

To succeed then meant hard work and study. You were required to know how to make almost everything connected with the production of a photographic print. You must know how to make collodion; how to coat a plate and how to sensitize and develop it; how to construct the silver bath in which the plate was sensitized; how to make the developer; how to clean the plate; how to prepare the nitrate of silver bath for sensitizing the albumen paper; to fume, print, tone and fix the prints; how to make paste and how to mount the prints. The amateur of those times was further required to make himself familiar with the chemistry involved in all this work; first in order that what he did he might do intelligently and successfully, and second, to be qualified to determine with a degree of certainty what was the matter when his chemicals gave unsatisfactory results.

The negative bath was one of his most treacherous friends; he could not predict, with any degree of certainty, what would happen to the next plate by the result on the one immediately preceding it. There seemed to be a demon lurking in the dark room watching for an opportunity to get you into trouble, and as the negative bath was the most sensitive, he would take advantage of this weak point; and if he had got into it bodily, with all the sulphur and cinders he is supposed to have adhering to his external person, and stirred it up vigorously with his fabulous pitchfork covered with lava from the pit, it could not have made the bath worse than it would sometimes get in an incredibly short time; and this would always happen at the worst possible moment. If you had invited some *particular friend* to have his picture made—some one to whom you wanted to show what you could do and what beautiful negatives you could make, how expert you had become—then this demon delighted to get into the bath and muddle it, so that, do the best you could, nothing but fog, fog, would be the result. The amateurs of those times wished frequently that Job had lived in their times and had become an amateur photographer; they did not believe he would think a few boils of any account, or if he did he would not have taken the first premium in a competition for patience.

It was such vexatious trials which kept the ranks of amateurs thin, and when one happened to be exposed and took the fever, he would get over it in a year or two, and so complete would be the cure, that you would never suspect that anything had been the matter. There were a few exceptions to this rule, which was when the trouble became chronic. I could point to a few examples of persons so affected; your speaker was one of that class. To him there is a fascination and a satisfaction in experimenting.

The development of an exposed plate brings one into close and intimate relation with nature. You are admitted into one of her interior sanctuaries, while she places in your hand one of her magical wands, and while you look at the white plate before you, lo! a form begins to come forth like a specter from its winding sheet, and apparently it throws off fold after fold of its snowy environments until it stands revealed in perfection and beauty. What can there be more wonderful than this?

THE staining of wood to imitate choice descriptions dates back some 260 years since. Early success in the art soon led to a more refined system of coloring apartments, and to using tints instead of charged colors, and although at one time the system of neutral tints threatened the expulsion of positive colors, the style was subsequently supplemented by more bold and positive arrangements of color. We greatly excel the early decorative painters in the production of delightful tints and half-tints, produced in endless variety by adding different proportions of the primary colors, tempered by light and shade, and in their distribution and arrangement so as to produce a soothing effect on the eye.



FLOWER DESIGN, BY HARRY A. DEANE.